

## **Life keeps happening by HoshisamaValmor**

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**Summary:** Life doesn't turn out to be like their young selves might have hoped, but it's still nice. Just a nostalgia fic.

## Life keeps happening

Author's Note: Just a little something that occurred to me some days ago. I never considered writing a fic for Will but he was the character that best suited this idea. It's his 27 birthday here.

Disclaimer: Don't own Stranger Things.

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*March 22, 1998*

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- Mike -

Will stared at the small screen of his cell phone for three seconds. It was the fifth call that day - his mom, Jonathan, a couple of colleagues from his previous job, and El. Still a pretty impressive number of calls - and it caught him by surprise. He pressed the button and Mike's voice sounded from the speaker even before he had time to lift the cellphone to his ear.

*"Hey, Will! It's Mike! It's been a while! Happy birthday!"*

"Hey, Mike," he replied with a smile that echoed in his voice clearly. "Yeah... yeah, it really has been. Thanks for remembering."

*"Sure thing. I know it's a bit late already, but I got kinda tangled up after work and you know..."*

"Yeah, I know. It's alright, I'm more than up yet."

*"Yeah, I'm glad. So, how have you been? Did you take the day off?"*

"No, no... We're in the middle of scheduling the next exhibit, I really have a lot of work to do. Besides, you know I never really cared much for my birthday."

*"Ah, don't be like that! You're almost thirty!"* he mocked from the other

end, forcing a weird mix of a chuckle and a groan out of Will. It's not like he hadn't really figured it out yet (and his mom had told him that very loudly and goo-y and proud-y on the phone. Several times), but it was... unreal. Of course, that little bit of news affected Mike just as much, and he soon added, with his own clear note of disbelief: *"Man, we are almost thirty! How can that be?"*

"Yeah..."

*"I remember when we were at school, it feels just like the other day! And then college flew by so fast..."*

"Yeah, tell me about it."

*"It really makes us feel old, doesn't it?"* That seemed to make him remember something funny, because he chuckled loudly. *"My mom almost hit me from across the phone when I said I was getting old! I think she would've had hit me if I was there."*

Will laughed. "I found some of our pictures from back in middle school on the other day. I have to say, I really did feel old then."

*"Yeah, it went by so fast. I guess I always thought things quieting down and having more normal lives would actually make it all boring and stale, but it just really flew by."*

"We were such little babies, though. I was..."

*"No, you weren't. At all, and you know it. We were the most childish ones!"*

Will snorted. "Uh-huh. Remember how I was always trying to push you guys to play D&D?"

*"I've played a campaign last year, you know?"*

"Really?" he said, smiling with the idea and the immediate rush of fond memories the mere mention brought back. Whole afternoons (or days) in Mike's basement with Dustin and Lucas, the amount of hours preparing and then the thrill of living the campaigns... he hardly had a single one fully clear in his mind anymore, but the feeling that entwined the mixture of parts and pieces of different games was what

remained. Then of course, memories with the new party additions also came, and maybe Will remembered perfectly how Max had obliterated the entire party on her second campaign because they were a bit older then... older like what, thirteen? He had to chuckle at the thought.

*"It was actually great! Made me think of you guys a lot. I haven't seen anyone in ages."*

"Me neither," he admitted. It left a little sour taste in his tongue after the small fondness the memories had brought. So instead, Will decided to enjoy it a little more. "Oh man, you and El were so annoying... always on each others' mouths. You started to ruin our campaigns, you know? You and Lucas... but well, at least Lucas could let go of Max for more than five seconds. At least Dustin understood me."

Mike laughed too, and Will could picture the tint of pink that would be on his cheeks, even if his mental image was considerably younger than Mike's face would certainly now be.

*"Yeah... teens really pretty annoying, aren't they?"*

"Don't be like that."

*"Come on, I know I was a jerk once or twice."*

"Uh-huh," Will played.

Mike laughed again. *"Yeah, okay, a couple more times than that..."*

"I'm kidding, Mike," he cleared. Then he remembered. "El called me earlier today."

"Oh."

Will tried to read that single sound, feeling a bit guilty. Maybe he shouldn't have brought it up at all.

"She sounded great," he still said, hoping it wouldn't cause more harm than good. To his relief, Mike didn't seem hurt or anything.

*"That's great to hear." There was a small pause. "Maybe I'll try to call her someday."*

Will nodded, even though Mike couldn't obviously see him. He changed subject, or diverted it, perhaps not too subtly.

*"So, since we're on the topic of kissing and whatnot, have you been seeing anyone? I don't remember if you said anything last time we talked."*

It was Will's turn to pause for a moment. He wasn't really sure what to say. Not necessarily because it was Mike, just because he wasn't fully sure himself. And whether or not it was worth mentioning it at all.

"Uh... yeah," he decided. "Actually, I have been seeing someone. I'm not sure if it's anything serious, though."

*"Hey, that's great! How'd you meet?"*

"On my last exhibit. He's an art critic. He had a lot of constructive criticism."

Will had learned to expect that little pause, even if it was from Mike. Will had mentioned his previous boyfriend at the time when they had talked on the phone, and he wasn't surprised when Mike's reaction had been the understandable 'Oh'. This time, it was a bit more seamless.

*"That's great to hear. So, you've been doing alright? You're still showcasing and everything?"*

"Yes, it's a new exhibit. I had a blast in L.A., and so-

*"Whoa! You're in L.A.?"*

Will smiled. "Yeah, well, I'm going to be traveling to San Diego a lot, though, because it's over there, and I liked L.A., so... It's a pretty amazing experience, Mike."

*"Yeah, I bet. You sound happy, though."*

He smiled again. "Tired... but yes, it's been something. First time I

heard I was coming to California, it made me think of Max a lot."

*"Oh, yeah! Now that's someone I haven't heard in a long while either."*

"Yeah." To think everyone would have made it so far. Alive. Even if they didn't really talk for long amounts of time and barely saw each other anymore, news still went by and they would more or less know everyone was alright. Living their lives. *"Life's what happens when you're busy making other plans"* and all that, right?"

*"Yeah, I guess so. We really had quite an amazing go though, didn't we?"*

"Hey, we're not that old yet! Here I was thinking we're all alive and everything, and you're making it sound so grim."

*"I was never the grim one! Ever thought about writing a book instead of making art? I mean, who'd believe us, right? You'd be the most successful fantasy author there is!"*

"I'd leave that to Nancy, but I'm sure everyone would give her shit about it later, saying she's not a journalist but just a fantasy author. Maybe Lucas could do it. Or Erica."

Mike laughed. *"Yeah, you're right. You'd do the art book then."*

Will had been walking down the streets without taking much notice of anything at all, not even the time, but as he remembered and gazed down, he started to stroll faster, only to realize he was practically at the restaurant already. Another closer look, and he could see Thomas smoking by the entry. He looked up and saw Will, waving, with that small smile of his on his lips.

"Hey Mike, I'm sorry but I... I have to go, okay? I..."

*"Oh, sure, sure, I don't want to hold you or..."*

"No, I'm... sorry. Thanks so much for calling. It was great to talk with you."

*"Sure thing, Will. It's great to know you're doing so well."*

Will looked down at his feet for a moment.

"I really miss you guys. It'd be great if we could get everyone together again someday." He said it, but he knew it would be pretty much impossible. Still, the reassurance and support Mike gave the idea made Will feel happy. And relieved, in a way. Like how, despite all the time and distance, and how things were so very much different than anything they might have ever imagined or hoped for as kids, there was still something of it all left. And it was great.

Will ended the call and closed the distance to Thomas, who put out his smoke.

"Hey," Thomas greeted him. "And you said no one would remember your birthday."

Will gave a little dismissive chuckle. "Yeah, well, guess I was wrong. People are busy, you know how it is... I don't need them to call me to know they still remember me or anything. But it does feel nice."

"You're a pretty lucky guy, you know?"

Another chuckle. "Yeah... yeah, I really am."

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the end

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Author's Note: Thanks for reading.